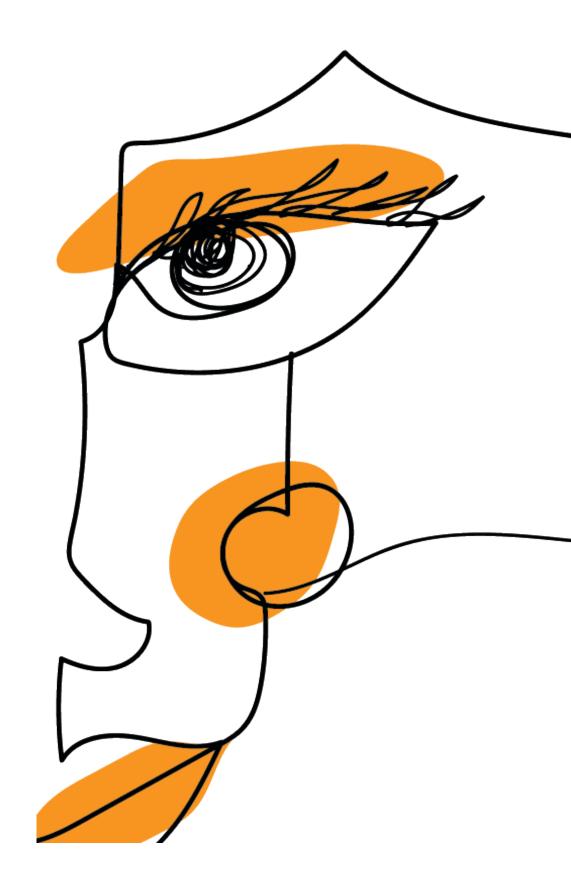
GEORGIA TECH LITERARY AND ARTS MAGAZINE

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"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson







Perishable Land: Agua Caliente Indian Reservation Zarif Rahman

Editor's Note

Stories run through my body or sit purring in my lap. So many they take my breath away, buzzing, boiling, humming. Uncalled they come to me, and told, they still won't leave me.

—The Teller of Tales, Gabriela Mistral

Dear Reader,

After fifty years, Erato is turning the page on a new chapter that is buzzing and boiling and humming with potential. We are reaching into the digital world with an inky hand (the other hand remaining firmly in the world of printed pages, equally inky), rummaging around for the doodle you made in class, the absent-minded lines you scrawled in your notebook, the portrait that took weeks to finish because you kept restarting to better paint the gleam of the eyes, the severalpage poem that poured out of you one night and dried up at the first hint of sunrise, and everything in between. We want it all, because every piece of art and writing is a story, and we want to tell it.

Maybe now you are thinking, "I am not an artist. I am not a writer. I'm not creative like that," but this is incorrect—you are an artist and a writer and perfectly creative because you have stories running through you. Maybe now you are thinking, "I don't have anything to say. I don't have anything like that to share," but this is incorrect—you are full of stories because you are a person living a life on this curious planet and there are many other people doing something similar, but also very different, and maybe you interact with some of these people.

Now, let me tell you a story that only exists because of these people like you who live their lives and interact with other same-different people. At the beginning, there is a consequence—an exciting fusion, a wrenching apart, a spark igniting, a fizzling out. You are well aware of many types of consequences. How do you deal with the aftermath? You probably need some time to sort everything out—a period of reflection. And when your mind and your heart are finally tidied up, you have probably done some growing (even if it's in the wrong direction). This is the story that binds these pages together—a journey paved with the individual stories of each artist and writer.

I am forever grateful to be on this journey with you, and your stories will stay with me, always. But now my chapter is coming to a close, and I must turn the page to leave you with new tellers of tales who are buzzing and boiling and humming with your stories. You are in good hands.

Sabrina Wilson

Editor-in-Chief



Table of Contents

Front Cover Untitled · Aparna Arul

- **01** Embrace Me · Sofia Gomes
- **02** Perishable Land: Agua Caliente Indian Reservation Zarif Rahman

Inner Back Cover Georgia Peach · Beecca Kiriazes Back Cover Untitled · Aparna Arul

Part I: Consequences

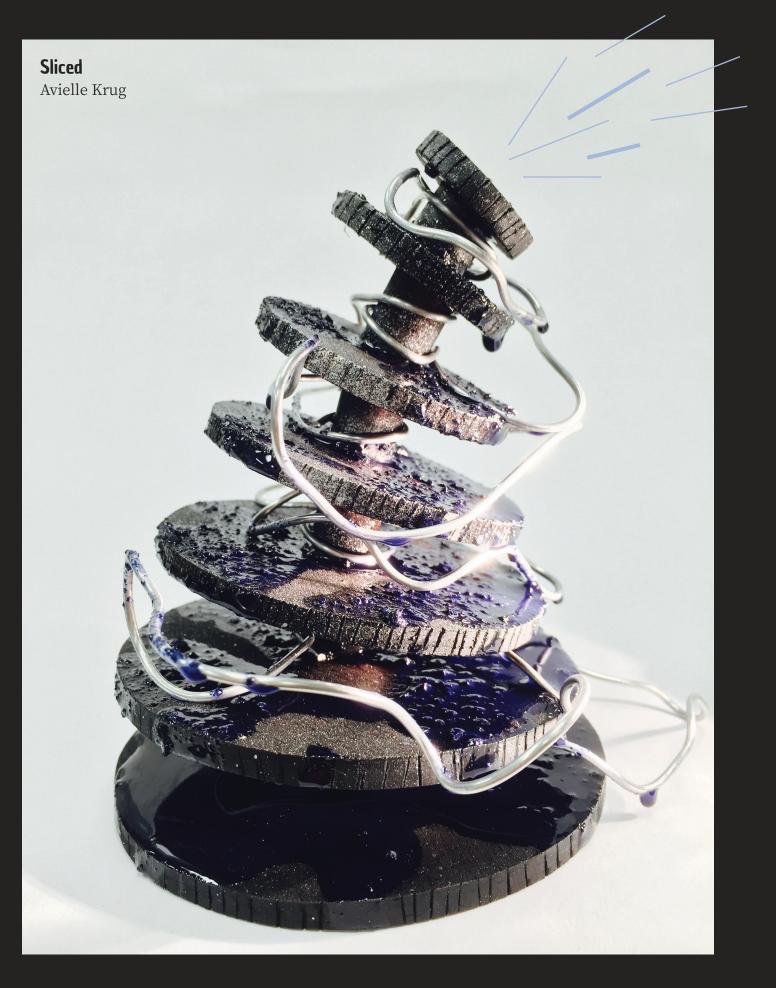
- 06 Sliced · Avielle Krug
- 07 La Expersion de Coraje · Jathan Caldwell
- 08 Tuesday · Alissa Kushner
- 09 Stranger at Play · Oliver Ahn
- 10 Great Wave of Kanagawa · Randy Li
- 11 Parity · Prerana Kamat
- 12 Perfect Porcelain Doll · A.M.
- **13** Out of the Binary · Abigail Russ
- 14 Ode to a Tomb · Drew Yates
- 15 Traveler · Sungtae Kim
- 16 Canada Plum · Mehdi Harley
- 17 Rooted · Karissa Reed
- 18 Solidarity in Days Off · Daniela Rodriguez
- **19** Untitled · Annie Truong
- 20 The Eros of Loss \cdot Yashvardhan Tomar
- 21 The New Norm \cdot Horace Yao
- 22 Who · Paola Rosado
- 23 Glass Fire · Katherine Joseph

Part II: Reflections

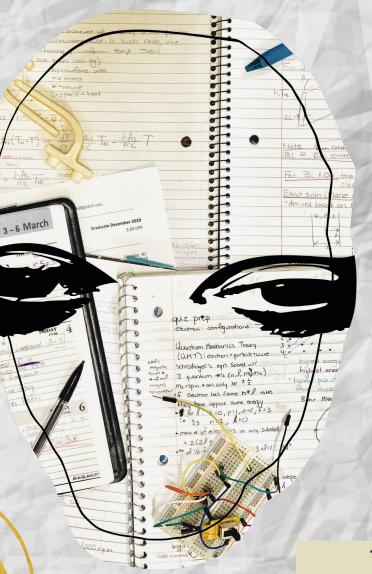
- 24 Ferris Wheel of Dreams · Ansley Fowler
- 25 Sleep Song · Conor Flannellly
- 26 Occupy Mars · Chase Goulet / Fly Me to the Moon · Natalie Boutwell
- 27 Midnight Pulsar \cdot Chase Goulet
- 28 The Present and the Past · Sarthak Navjivan
- 29 Refrain, 2019 · Nissim Gore-Datar
- **30** Village · Cameron Loyd
- **31** Door Xinjing Xu
- 33 Identity · Ismael Oumarou Cheiffou
- 34 Ultimately We All Walk Alone · Suraj Buddhavarapu
- 35 The Ashes of Obligations Suraj Rajendran
- 36 State of Mind · Cassandra Chu
- **37** So Tell Me About Yourself Samuel Walters / I Contain Multitudes • Christin Unachukwu
- **38** This Must Be The Place · Laura Shaheen / Ocean III · Shashwati Da Cunha
- 40 Keys · Katie Massa
- **41** Twelve Places · Carlos Sabater
- 42 Preciosa · Lola

Part III: Growth

- **43** Together We Are Visible Bahar Asgari
- **44** Revelation Morris Kindler / Shelter • Abhishek Das
- **46** We · Savonte McCuller
- 47 Wanderlust · Sai Nakirikanti
- **48** I am Love Jhazzmyn Joiner
- 49 Flowering Brain · Victoria Lozano
- 50 Together · John Jajeeh
- **51** Cactus Flowere · Natalie Boutwell
- **52** Growing Up · Zoe Holderness / Paradox of Identity · Anonymous
- **54** Kite Strings Brady Brove
- 55 Up Before the Rest of the City \cdot Erin Falejczyk
- 56 Lineage · Kyra Halbert-Elliott
- 57 Lorna · Hanna Etelalahti
- **58** Belong Everywhere Wesley Robinson / Wrought Acceptance • Haleey Steele
- **59** Messy and Marvelous Natalie Boutwell







Tuesday Alissa Kushner



E



Stranger at Play Oliver Ahn



Great Wave of Kanagawa Randy Li







| (_ _)

Perfect Porcelain Doll

Tattooed memories upon her cheek I know we said next week Dust to ash and ash to dust What remains to be seen?

Is it a must to discuss Or can we just wait Wait until we are grown Maybe then you'll know?

I saw you from afar Perfect porcelain doll But now that you are near Cracks and all appear

If to dust we must become Why, dear one, succumb Maybe soon we'll meet again And then we will begin.

Out of the Binary Abigail Russ

ART. BEES

Ode to a Tomb

Drew Yates

You used to believe that there'd be a way out. That over the next hill, the next mile, the next dune, you'd see the edge of civilization in the distance. That if you rode far enough over the sand you'd find the trees they used to talk about, the green things, maybe even an ocean -that you could get back to the past. You knew it was true, that salvation was just around the corner. The desert couldn't go on forever, logically at some point there would be something else, and you would see it. Eventually.

That was a dream that died a long time ago.

You used to hope that there was a way out, that there was something, anything else beyond this, but you' ve left those pleas behind now. Over time you' ve seen the desert destroy entire caravans, strip away mountains overnight. You' ve been in the sandstorms that blanket the world for days at a time, you' ve seen the vast expanse of dunes that roll for miles and miles-you know better now than to think there might be a place "Other."

How foolish; the desert is the world. It always has been.

And even there was something beyond the sands, something from the past, as you think some nights, staring up at the smoke-red sky; it wouldn't be there now. Whatever was in the past -if there was a past at all; most days the memories are indistinguishable from dreams, unreal and fleeting-it isn't there now; the storms have taken everything. So for all purposes they are everything. It's not important to question such things anyway, the Was and Wasn'ts, the what might have been realand the Never Was. It's an illusory distraction, and distractions will kill you. The only thing that you can depend on is what's existing now. That's all that's important, the Now, this instant when you can feel you' re still breathing. The grit in your skin, the smoke-sun glare, the scream of the wind. Those are real. The desert is real. The desert you can trust to always be real. And in a way you' re grateful for that.

Traveler Sungtae Kim

LI EDITION |15

Canada Plum

Mehdi Harley

I am sitting up on the picnic bench tabletop, hanging my legs into the water. I face out across the river. Her legs are crossed, and she is centered breadthwise on the table, aligned with the bench. Her right shoulder contacts my left without leaning into it. Our backs form a ninety-degree angle. The water is bitingly cold—the snowmelt and rain of early spring flooding the river. I wiggle my toes, one at a time, on each foot, to confirm that I am able. Wind blows North, along the run of the valley, coming in gusts. Twenty seconds after the wind stops, white petals drift by en masse, around my legs and under the table. I counted. Her head is inclined towards her chest, eyes flicking downward, then drifting back up. I want to ask what she's thinking, but I'm afraid to interrupt her—the deliberation of her gaze, following the floral rafts through the slats.

We must be fifty feet from the shore. Her cardigan is dripping an annular puddle around her, the olive knit darkened to a sort of brown by the tannins. My jeans are rolled to my knees; she'd had the foresight for shorts. I am wet to my chest, shivering. Our picnic table stands on its own little hilltop during the normal river stage. I had walked first, feeling for the bottom under the opaque water, and losing it to the force of the current and to the algae-covered rocks atop the retaining wall. She had let go of my hand, remaining upright, and waded along the edge, following a berm only a few feet submerged, directly to our table.

I don't register what she first says. I'm not expecting her words, and they sound distant amid the static crackle of dissipating river foam. She folds her legs up to her chest, and wraps her hands around her ankles. Her back is now angled at 45 degrees to my own, rounded, meeting mine with each exhalation. I turn my head to hear her.

I can see a bare-crowned ash tree downstream, along our chord of the riverbend. An older man in beige waders and an orange hunting cap stands near its base and casts a green fly line into the knotted roots. You only see fly fisherman this time of year—usually the channelized river is too deep to make anything but bait productive and you mostly find the shores littered with lawn chairs, and bottles, and inelegant catfish rods jammed into the sand. The man's line in the air above him forms intricate loops, which he pulls down to hold his fly while the wind blows.

She is talking about college now, and is speaking fast and sounds out of breath. She says my name, but she doesn't turn towards me, and it more or less feels like I am only accessory to what is occurring.

The ash tree has one of those green ribbons tied around the trunk that the city uses to mark diseased trees.

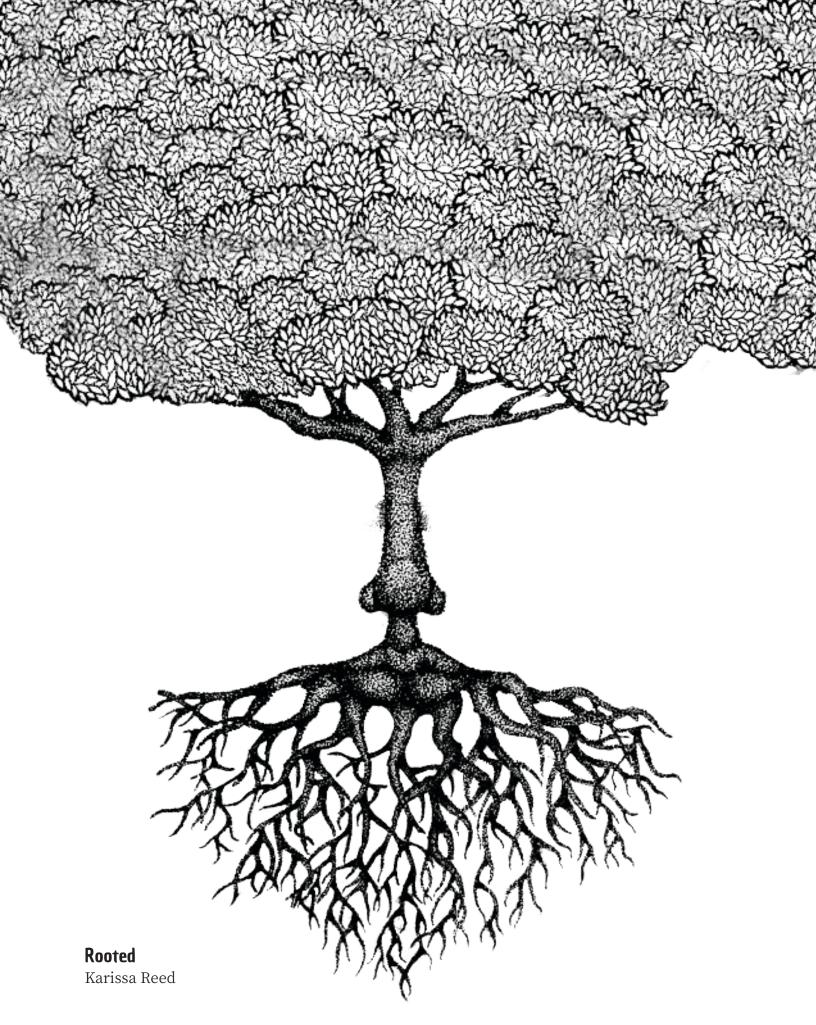
I put the index and middle fingers of my left hand on the pulse of my neck, and cradle my elbow in the palm of my right, which she always says looks like I' m holding an imaginary cigarette.

She keeps saying that she has to and that she knows.

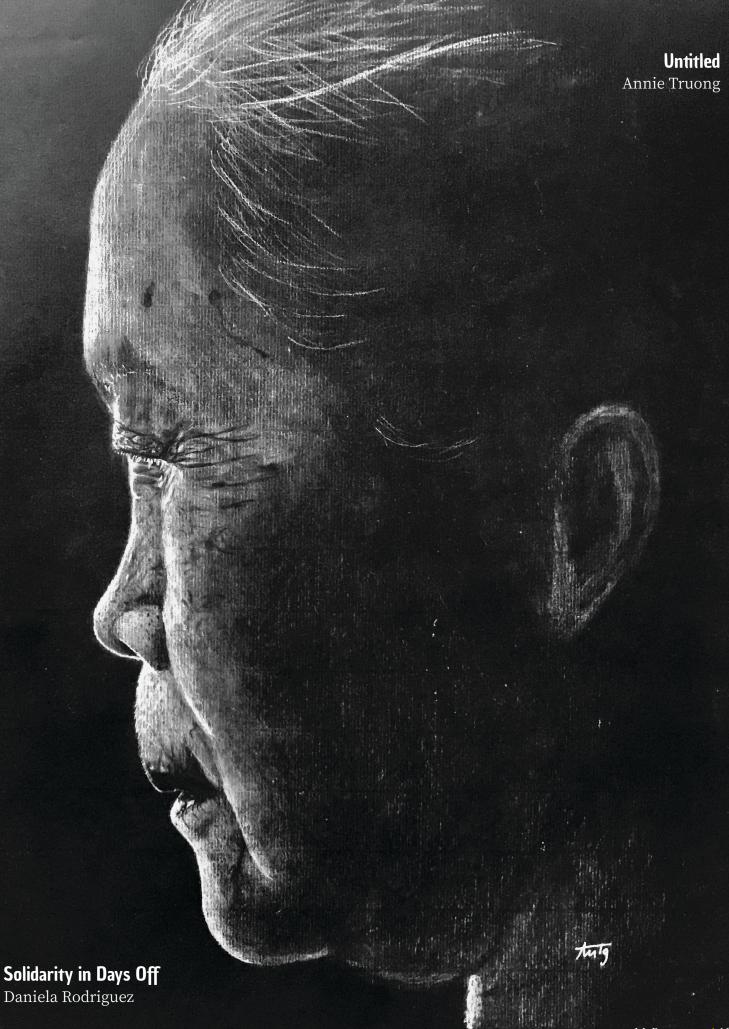
The man's rod is bending and pulsing, but I'm not able to see if there's a fish, or if he's snagged and the pull is from the current on the fly line.

I can hear her sniffling and the wavering of my own voice as I say something that could be to her or about the man. She reaches across me and collects her pair of pink Keds. I can't see her full face because it is veiled by her hair. A little droplet hangs from the tip of her nose. Her breath lingers in a faint wisp out in front of me. I gaze off through it at the man as he ties a black strap around his waist, and the dull cold of the river throbs in my legs.









LI EDITION | 19

The Eros of Loss

Yashvardhan Tomar

Are my fruits illegitimate for I have borne them in my roots? Picked from pyres, cold acrylic, my sins are nestled among my darkling leaves and thrushes' weaves O may your death be a fistful of fog thrown over morn's drowsy brows the way graves are filled with salt to make the dead feel beautiful about their rottenness.

II

This room is empty.

III

Right now. Give me this red mud. Give me this cigarette in your left hand and call it red mud.

The land blisters "from longing into longing"; every tree a sigh of infidelity. And now the plains have turned lavender for I've been weeping petals.

IV

List of things in the empty room you left behind: a toothbrush a bra a mascara one and a half dead mosquitos Of these: I threw away the unnecessary. The cat ate half of the fullmosquito.

V

The empty room is empty. Only a framed display of a mosquito sewn together from two halves. Underneath:the text— "Time wounds all heels."

VI

These evenings the dust rises, aroused finally by the last drags of afternoon heat, kisses me with molasses beading on her tongue just like you never did.

So I can forget about those few wayward stars still drugged on night's black ink:

I'm the newest refugee kneeling in her temple not in worship, but in hunger—

tangent to everything the Light warned me against.

VII

I threw away the unnecessary.

VIII

Why do I still breathe in your induced angles, then? Give me a used blade and call it red mud.

IX

An empty grave. Beautiful.

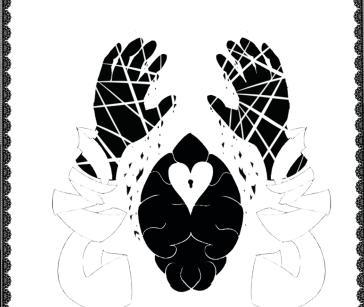
The New Norm Horace Yao

X

On nights such as this when the moonlight smoothing our backs mutters dares in the ears of us the faithless and the sky bereft is waiting to catch us on the other side of this last draught of wine I become impatient sometimes I let my tongue or tongues wander unarmed and aimless in stranger streets none of which lead to your doorstep

and still

I dare to be a hitchhiker in these wastelands for it is on nights such as this when the candles in the churchyard fear insult from our star-wet smirks after the deed is done the city blesses the ones with sewn wrists and my tongue limping around corners inside whoever lends their arms if just for the night I do I do sometimes taste on these nights the houses without mirrors the houses you' ve been visiting.



Who

Paola Rosado

XI

This heart is empty.

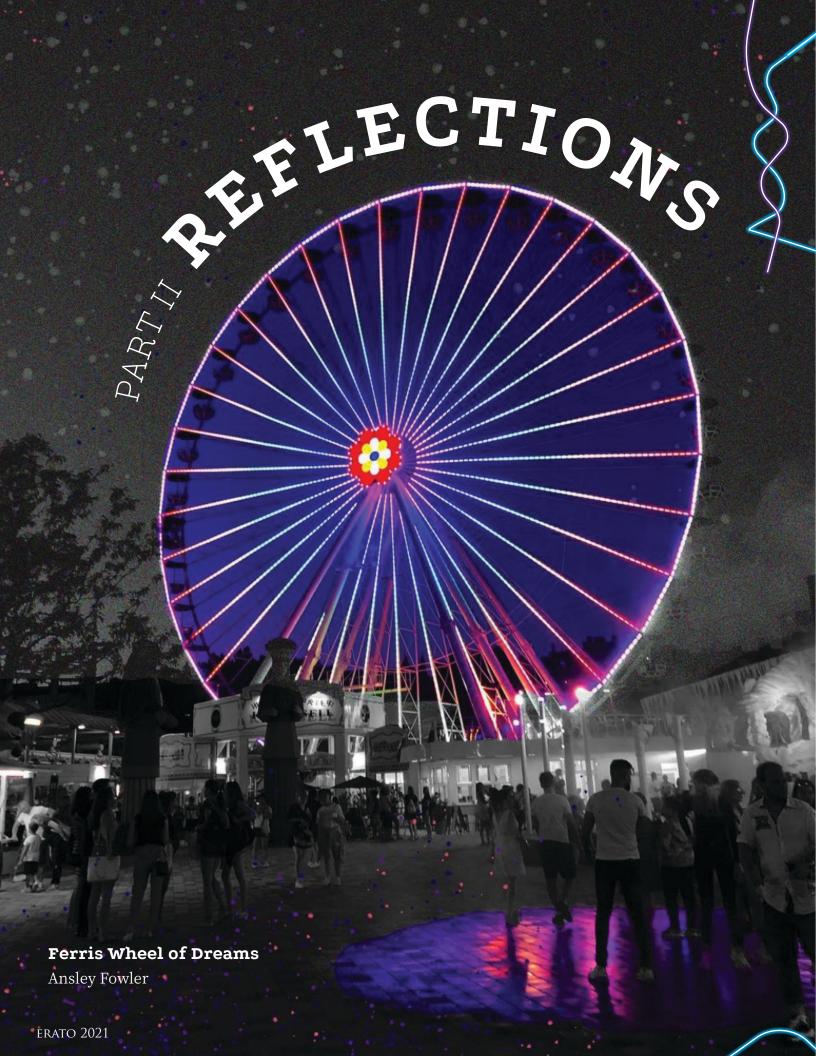
Not empty. Empty. Not empty. Empty. Not empty. Empty. Not empty. Not empty. Not empty. Not empty. Empty. Empty. Empty. Not empty. Empty. Empty. Not empty.

Empty. Damn.

Beautiful.

XII

The moral of this story is forever immoral. The forever story of your mortality is a poem. The poet is cut like a tree.



Sleep Song

Conor Flannelly

We are travelers in someone else's time And space, you and I, Permanent guests in a foreign world, Just passing through this borrowed life. We starry-eyed stardust, We live in the in-betweens, In the number before infinity, Slipping through the cracks Where night and day meet, Vacillating from cold to hot To cold again (and again), Running from past to future, Old enough to know ourselves But too young to know we are More than just ourselves. Always headed our separate somewheres, We are never actually anywhere, Every moment, every movement, Every breath Chasing the one before. We carry our baggage with us as we go, Just the clothes on our backs to show for it, Huddled together atop a stiff Mattress on a cold hotel floor, knowing We could really be something If we only had the time. I see change even in your stillness,

Shadows dancing across your face Like moonlight on the surface of a pond, Waxing and waning to the celestial rhythm, One body mirroring the many, Filtering through your skin, Flickering, Gone. In this particular nothing In this particular nowhere, I feel as though I see you— Really see you—for the first time, And that to me is everything. So even as drops of dawn trickle Through chinks in the curtains, Sleep a moment more, my dear, Linger a while longer in your Ineffable, ethereal dreams As I wonder what wonderful worlds Exist within your beautiful mind. I have much to learn about this Stranger beside me in bed, but In this moment, our paths converge, And we belong only to each other. You've earned your rest, love, So take your time.

Occupy Mars

Chase Goulet

Fly Me to the Moon

Natalie Boutwell

Afternoons spent with Frank Sinatra and my grandma Were always complete with chocolate chip cookies, lemonade,

And the pitter-patter of raindrops on windowpanes.

"Fly me to the moon..." Her voice would fill the kitchen with a golden glow, Radiating a gentle grace and grand generosity.

Midnight Pulsar

Chase Goulet

Those days when her abundant love made everything seem possible Were my favorites.

But they couldn't last much longer.

Like dying daffodils and daisies after spring, She started to fade away.

Soon, our afternoons together were gone. I wanted to cry And wallow in the downpour. "Fill my heart with song..." I sang, instead, in her memory, Remembering her endless love.

"Let me sing forevermore..." And I will continue to sing, Never letting go of our precious moments together.





Poet's Note: The title alludes to the fact that the poem is a poignant end-verse or refrain to the year 2019, a year in which we as a people often refrained from compassion and consideration for those who are different from us in some way or the other. It is also a warning that we should refrain from repeating the mistakes of the past, of which 2019 had plenty.

Refrain, 2019

Nissim Gore-Datar

Do you remember yesteryears When the truth was not a lie? When fabricated fiction was Distinguished from fact by

People just like you and me Who cared not for tall rhetoric Who ventured past the raw emotion Of sentimental politics

And listened to the voices true That rose above the din Imploring us to think beyond Our friends, acquaintances and kin.

Somewhere we have lost our way; Today these voices cannot say What occupies their rational minds, Which are, for now, confined behind

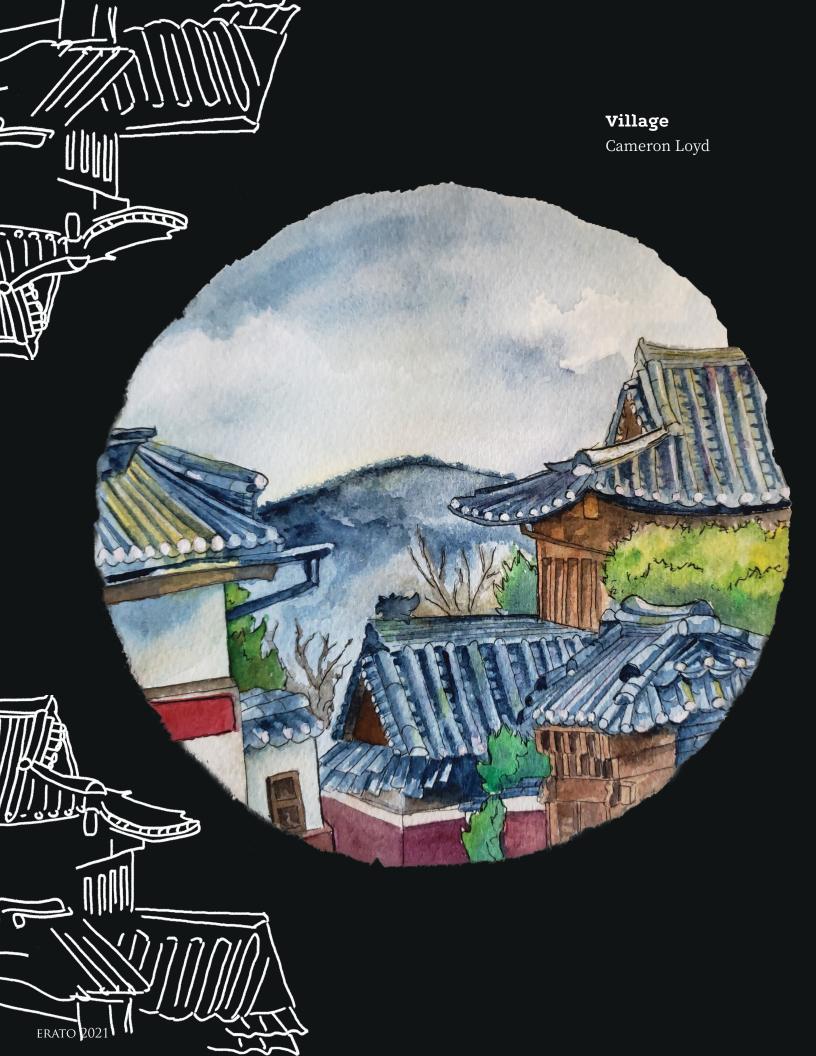
High walls of feigned intellect, Built of bricks of casteand sect, Rooted inmyopic thought That lets the Other be forgot And thrives on measured, shallow gain Meant to ensure,once again, That power does not propagate To those who do not love to hate.

Canwe just bystanders be, And witness such atrocity Against the few who dare to think And express, with voice or ink,

Dissent, Debate, Diversity The engines of democracy, The pillars of plurality The bane of insularity?

Friend, remember yesteryear And know that freedom still can reign. If we will, we can persevere To weather this tempestuous rain

For clouds of narrow thought shall clear And reason rise again; Lessons learnt in the darkest times Are seldom learnt in vain.







Identity Ismael Oumarou Cheiffou

LI EDITION 133

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Ultimately We All Walk Alone Suraj Buddhavarapu

The Ashes of Obligations

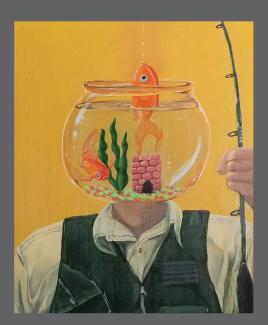
Suraj Rajendran

The girl timidly walked on the wet, raw earth, And from that earth, She felt the ancient ethereal conscience of her ancestors, Wandering, never ceasing to exist, Driven by the human tendency to roam and explore. Why are those perpetual wanderings, Replaced by the angular routines of obligation? Why is it that the desire to see, The desire to experience, To feel, to travel, Submitting to societal norms, The ticking of wristwatches, The furious scribbling of pens on calendars, Familial expectations, Why are we trapped by these obligations? Mankind has embarked on the path of self-denial. She breathed in the misting fog, Reminiscent of a vast eel. Her hands were ashy. And with them she clenched a fragment of soil.

Finally, she broke free.









State of Mind

Cassandra Chu



So Tell Me About Yourself

Samuel Walters

.

"So tell me about yourself."

We've all heard it countless times. College essays, first dates, job interviews, new roommates.

I hate that sentence in all of its vagueness; The expectation to summarize myself in three lines, 12 point font.

Can my identity really be formatted into a one page resume? Can it be characterized at all?

I suppose I am simply a story I'm still writing And the back cover says "Read it yourself."

I Contain Multitudes

Christin Unachukwu

LI EDITION 37

Ocean III

Shashwati Da Cunha

I came here from far, far away. I flew miles in search of this place, the edge of the ocean. I stared into the unknown depths. The water began to rise higher, higher, higher, higher f h **h** i **e** g **l** h **p** e **m** r

I learn to float. Then I looked into my reflection and I cast my new through it. Every day, I drew, looking for a fish like me but nothing.

So I climbed into the net and in a deep breath plunged into the ocean. *I am one of you now.* Surely there must be someone like me here?

A fish! dancing like ripples through my reflection I let it come closer and closer, it bit my neck

> with shark teeth My blood dissolvedand I fell deeper

But I am not dead. What am I?

Or am I something more

Am I the hunter

Am I a fish

e

Am I the ocean?

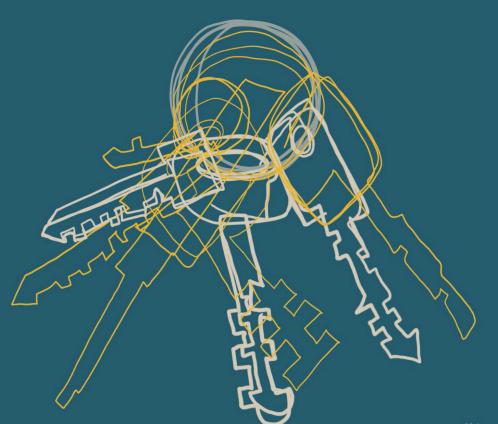
When I draw away this net, this veil, who do you see?

This Must Be The Place

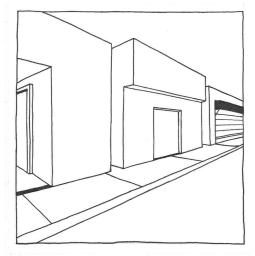
Laura Shaheen

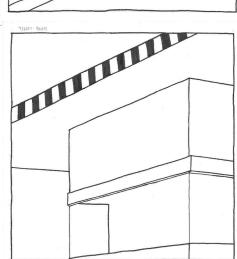


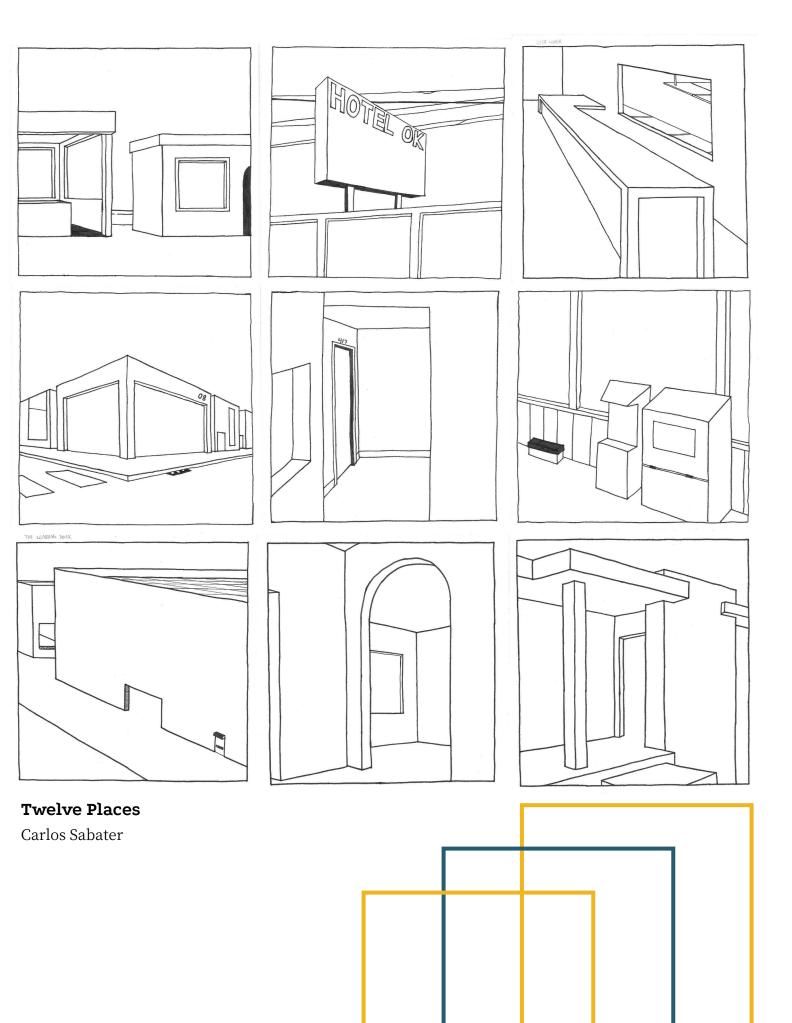
Keys Katie Massa



SM.







LI EDITION | 41

Preciosa

Red, White, And blue, No, I do not speak of the land you call America, I'm mourning over the forgotten colony, the island painted with the melanin of three races, Where the weather doesn't compare to other places.

Oh, how Nong to be there! To be submerged in the sound of the waves, To be cured of this homesickness with a tropical breeze, To live in a country where I am understood.

And I know that my accent is not very good, Trust me I would leave this place if I could, It's just hard to find the words to explain how it feels, To miss every single one of your mom's home-cooked meals.

You add a little spice and try to forget, how your dad used to play that old cassette, but the songs just linger around your head, "You will be fine" he said.

Although the nights here are longer, Not everything is black and white, I've found a family that makes me stronger, And even if our stories are not the same, we've all been distinguished because of our names, we all understand the sacrifices we've gone through to make a change, Even if that sacrifice is leaving the place, we love the most,

Our compassion now spreads from coast to coast.



Together We Are Visible Bahar Asgari



Revelation

Morris Kindler

Silently singing our supplications Along with the mass of humanity To strengthen now our fortifications And help all mankind keep its sanity Seven-headed dragons circle the sky And strike down shining stars from the heavens The hill on which our city dost now lie Trembles as a drake nearby fields leaven A frantic mother rushes to our gate With a tiny babe clutched in her arms Although the wyrms' assaults will not abate Inside our home the child is safe from harm And though our fields and forests be defiled Our city is warmed by life of this child.

> **Shelter** Abhishek Das



うち うちょう たいちょう しょう ひんしょう たいない たいしん たいしょう

We Savonte McCuller

Your, my Our Scarlet blood spilling out

Echoes of Existence clamouring

You, me, Witness to a Love Innocent even in our Darkness: A Love Resting within the flowers, the Trees, withing the sunlight, the rain, Within the stones of the earth, within "Human-ness," our beckoning frailty

All in Endless Communion

Barriers Man made, Love Innocent climbs over, Loudly in silence, Blazing Presence Here, Unravelling isolation.

A "we-ness" tugs. Its weight is light.





l am Love

Jhazzmyn Joiner



I am love.

I am the sunshine in the morning, which brightens your day, The coffee that you drink to start you on your way, The blanket that you use to keep you warm at night, The feeling, in your heart, of peace and light.

I am love.



I am the angel, on your shoulder, directing your path, The joke inside your head that makes you laugh, The comfort of the heat during the month of winter, Your favorite donut with the raspberry center.

I am love.

I'm the piece of hope in a world gone cold, The person who's there for you ready to take on the load, The part of GT's chant that is the brave and the bold, The one cheering you on, saying "go for the gold."

I am love.

I am the part of you that eliminates any doubt, The part that keeps you sane when you' re ready to shout, The one who helps you when you can't quite figure it out, The flower in the garden that's ready to sprout.

I am love.

I am the peace treaty that ends the war. I am the music. I am the score. I am something you'll need forevermore.

I am love.











Together John Jajeh

Cactus Flower Natalie Boutwell

My mamma taught me to be resilient. "You' re a cactus flower in the desert," she would tell me.

As a child, that meant getting back up after falling off my bike, being brave in the dark of bedtime.

But, as I've grown, it has come to mean learning how to move on after a loss, finding courage in a sea of people.

I' ve learned, over the years, that life, no matter its setbacks, will always find a way...

I've seen flowers sprout in snow, their fragility rising above the surrounding strength of bitter iciness.

I've heard piano music drift through jail cells with rhythms and riffs uncertain yet determined to be heard.

I've seen vines grow in concrete, their vibrant, winding green conquering the stubborn, stiff grayness.

And I will see myself blossom, pink petals and all, in the swirling, calamitous desert sands of life.



Growing Up Zoe Holderness

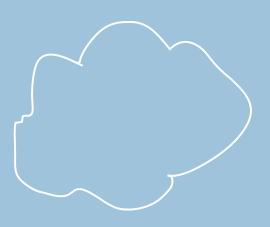
Paradox of Identity

Identity, Community, and Belonging

In this moment, I am overlooked by My future accomplishment, My future goals, My peers, And myself...

However,

I am far more than my resume and the rumors of my onlookers I am many small experiences which foster growth and happiness In multitude, these experiences are my identity These are what I live for



I live for a white blanket cuddling the concrete Droplets of rain cradling my skin Rays of sunshine burning from within

I live for smooth ice cream And savory french fries These explode in my mouth Recklessly forcing my taste buds to comply

I live for artists in any form

Colors that are cold and lukewarm Pages of words which transform A harmony and melody that swarms

I live for knowledge and the clarity it allows

It's the learning that matters not the performance I vow



I live for the spontaneity that adventure brings

From mountains to beaches The soil between my toes and the waves echoing From busy streets to passing smile The possibilities continue for miles and miles

I live for shared laughter

Which stems from long cries With the people who are my home I hope they never say good bye

I live for my home

blinding city lights which light up the sky Sweet hums of car engines signaling another soul passing by The skyscapers which I aspire to embody and live by Oh look! A Yellow Jacket Bright Quick Mostly, Elegant I live for untold stories

Mostly, **I live for untold stories and the mystery of every new day** For a life can change in a moment Where there is a will, there is a way.

Kite Strings

Brady Brove

I am passing fields of flowers; yellow and purple meld together as the train speeds past. In the meadows I am following with my soul on a kite string billowing in the excitement of the destination to come. Up in the clouds, I' m lost in my mind. Until two toddlers bring me to the ground, pulling my kite string back to the now.

They both are with their families waddling down the aisle toward the other. The family before me, blue eyes and blonde hair, with alluring Australian accents, moves confidently to the back of the train. The family behind, perfect eyebrows and dark brown hair, with calming Castillian cadences, sashays to the front.

The adults ignore the others because their languages present a barrier, but the toddlers know neither and connect together. They smile and wave and any tension dissipates. This wall their parents had built melds with my kite string and we are all connected and present, thanks to two toddlers who know nothing but the language of love.

Up Before the Rest of the City Erin Falejczyk



Lineage Kyra Halbert-Elliott

There are three of us. Mother, Daughter, Granddaughter. One girl for each generation. I am the last, no. 3, looking back at the trailblazers before me.

There is a bond that runs through us. We stand on each other's shoulders - and we know it. And where we are always kind in our support of others, We are unendingly critical of ourselves.

There is no bullshit here. Each one pushes the next: harder, farther, faster, better. Not just because we should but because we can. Because we are capable of everything we dream.

There are tears shed at my mother's criticisms. Many hours dedicated to becoming the best at my grandmother's behest. In the end, they are right. They are always right. There is the truth that, Without their sacrifices, Without their sharp words and 'cut the crap' attitudes, Without their unwavering support,

I would not be where I am today.



Belong Everywherre Weesley Robinson

Yes you are the air ever present and passing. Come and go as you please As the wind between the leaves.

See the green masses Too long stood stagnant Refracting rays through canopy In simple slow patterns

Fly through,

Yes, billowing breeze, you. Bend the stems, brush the leaves Spur them to sing softly Rustling staticky passages, hushed ocean tones. Bringing life as to lungs in tentative undulation

But you must pass Yes, fleeting spirit, fly away Come and go as you please Leave change you'll never see.

Wrought Acceptance Haley Steele

Messy and Marvelous

Natalie Boutwell

Life can be messy.

Tears falling after breakups and hardships and tragedies, A painter's palette splatting white walls like a kaleidoscope, Screams and shouts following disagreements, controversies, feuds, Muddy dog prints tramping down hallways.

But life can also be marvelous.

Hugs sharing warmth and comfort from our loved ones, A golden-rainbow sunset slowly sinking over crashing ocean waves, Shared laughter and smiles spilling over delight and cheer, A galaxy of stars above illuminating hope and curiosity.

The messy and the marvelous: Inevitably linked – like night and day. They make life what it truly is: A joyous triumph of mountains and valleys, Ripe for exploration and adventure.

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